

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 69

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 4—Relative to the Vernon P. Valenzuela Memorial Highway.

[Filed with Secretary of State August 15, 2013.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 4, Fuller. Vernon P. Valenzuela Memorial Highway.

This measure would designate a specified portion of State Highway Route 204 in the City of Bakersfield as the Vernon P. Valenzuela Memorial Highway. The measure would also request the Department of Transportation to determine the cost of appropriate signs showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources covering that cost, to erect those signs.

WHEREAS, Vernon P. Valenzuela was born January 15, 1949, to the late Louis and Nellie Valenzuela. He was raised in Bakersfield, California, the youngest of five siblings; and

WHEREAS, In 1966 Mr. Valenzuela quit high school to join the United States Army and volunteered to serve in Vietnam; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela served in Vietnam from October 1967 to May 1968, when he was wounded in battle. After his honorable discharge in 1969, he returned to Bakersfield and obtained his high school diploma by attending night school; and

WHEREAS, The following September, Mr. Valenzuela became the first member of his family to attend college; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela discovered the large Associated Veterans Students Club at Bakersfield College, and his association with the organization began his life as a leader and veterans advocate; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela became an active student and held positions as President of both the Associated Veterans Students Club and the Bakersfield College Student Body; and

WHEREAS, After graduating with an associate of arts degree in 1973, Mr. Valenzuela continued his education at California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB), where he was a charter member of the first student council and began working in the Veterans Cost of Instruction Program (VCIP); and

WHEREAS, While still attending CSUB, Mr. Valenzuela was hired to be Assistant Director of the Bakersfield College VCIP; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela obtained his bachelor's degree in June 1975 and began counseling students at Bakersfield College, many of whom were veterans. He touched so many people's lives during his college years that

for the rest of his life he would run into people he knew while at college, who remembered him, who were helped by him, or whose children thanked him; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela received his masters degree in counseling in 1977 and earned his license in marriage and family therapy in 1979, specializing in treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela began his private practice shortly after his marriage in 1981, focusing on veterans with PTSD. He worked as a contract counselor with the Sepulveda Vet Center from 1981 to 1989, inclusive; and

WHEREAS, During the 1990s, Mr. Valenzuela traveled to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. and joined the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). He became the President of the charter chapter of Bakersfield VVA and gradually worked through local, state, and national levels of the organization; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela served as VVA's California president in 1993, and went on to serve on national committees for PTSD, substance abuse, and the Veterans Initiative, which involved several trips to Vietnam to recover MIA remains; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela presented PTSD seminars throughout the nation, and was called on to work with Oklahoma City bomb survivors and United Auto Workers members in the New York area after September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, During his involvement with VVA, Mr. Valenzuela became a leading advocate for the Vet Center program, meeting quarterly in Washington with Readjustment Counseling Services Director Dr. Alfonso Batres to discuss issues related to the Vet Center program; and

WHEREAS, In 1997, Mr. Valenzuela made a conscious decision to bring his efforts to a more local level and was welcomed into the Kern County Network for Children. His efforts over the last decade included advocating for children and bridging the gap of community services for veterans. Throughout the late 1990s, he collaborated with the network to raise funds for graduating seniors and families in need during the holiday season within Kern County; and

WHEREAS, In April 2008, Mr. Valenzuela was recruited to be the first Team Leader for the new Bakersfield Vet Center, helping to establish a much needed counseling resource for combat veterans throughout Kern County; and

WHEREAS, As Team Leader of Bakersfield Vet Center, Mr. Valenzuela's goal was to meet all needs of the veterans, and make the vet center a safe haven, a place where veterans could come for any help or need. He wanted the vet center in Bakersfield to be a model for all other vet centers, knowing that the people of Bakersfield are truly unique in their giving capacity and collaborative efforts; and

WHEREAS, In addition to providing counseling and overseeing the operation of the vet center, Mr. Valenzuela was instrumental in beginning the Veterans Justice Program in Kern County and, along with other veterans and community resources, created and chaired the newly formed Kern

County Veterans Collaborative. Mr. Valenzuela's goal was not just to provide counseling services, but also to provide any service or answer any question a veteran may have; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Valenzuela passed away at 63 years of age on Monday, March 26, 2012, overlooking the ocean and surrounded by his family; and

WHEREAS, Vernon P. Valenzuela is survived by his wife of 30 years, Lise, and their three grown children, Robert, Alison, and Katie, all of whom are very proud to have been his family; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature hereby designates the portion of State Highway Route 204 between F Street and Q Street in the City of Bakersfield as the Vernon P. Valenzuela Memorial Highway; and be it further

Resolved, That the Department of Transportation is requested to determine the cost of appropriate signs consistent with the signing requirements for the state highway system showing this special designation and, upon receiving donations from nonstate sources sufficient to cover the cost, to erect those signs; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the Department of Transportation and to the author for appropriate distribution.